

that the phraseology and terminology employed herein are for the purpose of descriptions and should not be regarded as limiting.

As such, those skilled in the art will appreciate that the conception, upon which this disclosure is based, may readily be utilized as a basis for the designing of other structures, methods and systems for carrying out the several purposes of the present invention. It is important, therefore, that the claims be regarded as including such equivalent constructions insofar as they do not depart from the spirit and scope of the present invention.

It is therefore an object of the present invention to provide a new and improved locking clamp that has all of the advantages of the prior art clamps and none of the disadvantages.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a new and improved locking clamp that may be easily and efficiently manufactured and marketed.

An even further object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved locking clamp that has a low cost of manufacture with regard to both materials and labor, and which accordingly is then susceptible of low prices of sale to the consuming public, thereby making such locking clamp economically available to the buying public.

Still another object of the present invention is to provide a new locking clamp that provides in the apparatuses and methods of the prior art some of the advantages thereof, while simultaneously overcoming some of the disadvantages normally associated therewith.

Even still another object of the present invention is to provide a locking clamp that allows a user to easily apply a prying action to a workpiece to move the workpiece into position for fastening with a one-handed operation. This allows a more convenient and efficient installation of paneling and decking.

Still yet another object of the present invention is to provide a locking clamp for the installation of paneling and decking. This makes it possible to increase the speed and efficiency of tongue and groove paneling installation for floors and walls.

Still yet another object of the present invention is to provide a new and improved method of holding a workpiece using a locking clamp comprising two opposed vise grip members disposed in a common plane and pivotally connected at one end, a fixed handle, a movable handle, a lever-locking mechanism, and two swivel-headed threadably extendable members attached to the free ends of the vise grip members in an offset position.

175 a preferred embodiment of the present invention, but the handles may also be curved, and more preferably the handles are shaped to comfortably fit the contour of a hand of a user of the locking clamp. The handles may also be covered with a plastic or rubbery material for a more comfortable grip.

180 The lever-locking mechanism and unlocking lever mechanism of the locking clamp of the present invention may include a toggle linkage to allow the locking clamp of the present invention to maintain a grip on a workpiece when the linkage is in the locked position, and relax a grip on the workpiece when the unlocking lever is activated. The lever-locking mechanism and unlocking lever mechanism of the locking clamp of the present invention may also be any type of mechanism useful for vise grip clamps which are known to those skilled in the art.

185 The hallmark of the locking clamp of the present invention is the combined structure of a vise grip clamp with a pair of swivel-headed, threadably extendable members attached to the free ends of the vise grip clamp in an offset position. This novel construction allows a user to easily apply a prying action to a workpiece with one hand to facilitate the installation of paneling and decking. In particular, the locking clamp of the present invention allows a user to pry a
190 workpiece into position for fastening with a one-handed operation. This increases the speed and efficiency of the installation of decking and paneling, especially the installation of tongue and groove workpieces for flooring and wallcovering.

In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the swivel-headed, threadably extendable members are carriage bolts with a knurled surface to allow a workpiece to be firmly
195 gripped while preventing damage to the workpiece being held by the locking clamp of the present invention. The knurled surface may comprise a metal, or it may preferably comprise a plastic or rubbery material. The threaded connectors allow easy replacement and changing of the grip faces. The grip faces may be flat, convex, concave, or any other suitable shape.

In use, it can now be understood that the locking clamp of the present invention allows a
200 user to pry a workpiece into position for fastening with a one-handed operation, for instance by using the locking clamp to grip a rafter or joist while swiveling the locking clamp to pry wood into place for fastening. This increases the speed and efficiency of many construction activities. The locking clamp of the present invention is particularly suited to increasing the speed and

efficiency of the installation of decking and paneling, especially the installation of tongue and
205 groove workpieces for flooring and wallcovering.

While a preferred embodiment of the locking clamp has been described in detail, it should
be apparent that modifications and variations thereto are possible, all of which fall within the true
spirit and scope of the invention. With respect to the above description then, it is to be realized
that the optimum dimensional relationships for the parts of the invention, to include variations in
210 size, materials, shape, form, function and manner of operation, assembly and use, are deemed
readily apparent and obvious to one skilled in the art, and all equivalent relationships to those
illustrated in the drawings and described in the specification are intended to be encompassed by
the present invention. For example, any suitable sturdy material such as rigid plastic or composite
material may be used instead of the metal described. Also, the carriage bolt may also be made of
215 heavy-duty plastic such as nylon or similar material. And although use of the locking clamp of the
present invention in connection with applying a prying action to a workpiece and the installation
of paneling and decking have been described, it should be appreciated that the locking clamp
herein described is also suitable for use as a regular set of pliers or vise grips by removing the
carriage bolts. Furthermore, a wide variety of swivel-headed threadably extendable members may
220 be used instead of the carriage bolts described.

Therefore, the foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the
invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled
in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown
and described, and accordingly, all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to,
225 falling within the scope of the invention.